

Against Fate
St. Gregory of Nyssa



[M. 145 & J.31] You certainly recall the occasion when, if I may speak in accord with the Gospel, the great mountain of faithlessness in your midst was recently transformed into faith (cf. Mt 17.20). In his old age, the most wise Eusebios pondered over the [M. 148] necessity of human intention and what seems to be an apparent lack of divine direction with regard to our good. I was astounded at the way this man who had formerly been deceived by unfaithfulness later prevailed against infidelity through his great faith, for in the course of our conversation, we had discussed the issue of fate [J. 32]. You have directed me, oh venerable and holy leader, to fully describe the discussion of certain philosophies in the great city of Constantine concerning this subject. Because I do not have the leisure for composing a lengthy letter, I have kept the subject matter short by maintaining the form of a simple, unelaborated presentation. In this way, I may retain the style of a letter without enlarging it into a book.

I have offered several observations about our religion to a certain man trained in pagan philosophy. In this way, I strived to win him over from Greek [superstition] to our point of view, for [his belief] hinders many persons from using their own judgment and renders them powerless by subjecting them to necessity. Such superstition is contrary to my opinion. If a Christian subjects himself to fate, he will indeed fall into its trap, which is clearly inimical to our position. On the other hand, if a person prevents himself from being governed by fate, it will have no influence at all. Having said this, I believe that we must shun knowledge of Greek [J. 33] superstition, which can captivate and hinder us from following our faith. Since fate is inexorable, people say that everyone is subject to its demand and that they are reduced to its domination. Included are our span of life, differences among people, the choices we make, the various kinds of bodies, and their respective qualities. In this way, fate maintains its control and bestows servitude, wealth, poverty, corporeal illness, health, and a short or lengthy life span (for whether a person lives a short or long time does not depend upon his own impulse; rather, necessity determines the consequence). Whether death is voluntary or forced, its sentence is meted out in different ways, for example, by chance, hanging, a judge's sentence, or by treachery. In addition to more general kinds of afflictions, we have earthquakes, shipwrecks, floods, fires, and other similar disasters. They all have one cause, and our capacity for free choice with regard to life accounts for nothing; rather, everything is dependent upon fate's [M. 149] power, whether it happens to be philosophy, public speaking, agriculture, sailing, marriage, or the single life, all show that necessity controls both virtue and evil. Thus, the unchanging [J. 34] nature of fate establishes a person either in a loftier mode of life, poverty, or freedom. It similarly applies to a grave robber, pirate, a person living profligately, or someone characterized by effeminate behaviour. No one should think that these examples compel us to accept fate where our capacity to make choices plays no role; rather, they demonstrate that we should depend upon necessity, the source of our impulses, which is imposed upon us against our will and abrogates our free choice.

Examination of these matters leads me to inquire whether or not we can ascribe fate to God, who administers everything by his will. The [philosopher] who charged me with stupidity has said, "You seem to lack knowledge of celestial matters. If you were familiar with the power of fate, you would then know its source and unalterable nature." I am amazed at this and was asked to clarify myself, that is, whether our capacity for free choice, which appears sovereign and without master in its authority, is governed by fate or whether something else is responsible. Once again, [the philosopher] says, "When contemplating the heavens' movement, the zodiac's circle which is equally divided [**J. 35**] into twelve parts, you are able to comprehend the power of each star and its particular energy. The union of their qualities produces a composite of whether they are united or separated from another star or whether the inferior star is subjected to a superior one or should the superior eclipse it. For example, we obtain a different result from what has either come together or has been separated as in a triangle with uneven sides or any other geometric shape." This person claims that fate interprets such matters because its unalterable nature is responsible for the union existing among stars. When told of such a novel idea (I am neither acquainted with it nor instructed in these matters), I was expected to know fate's intention as revealed through the stars. I will now clarify myself as follows. Other persons have informed me about the stars' motion with respect to one another, the opposite movement within them according to a fixed circuit [**M. 152**] and their revolution caused by the zodiac's circle [**J. 36**]. As a result, they firmly believe that the stars' light advances and recedes according to their respective orbits and that the superior light succeeds and hides the inferior light from view. Once the inferior becomes obscured, the following is supposed to happen: a different form appears when the star's revolution encompasses the one lying behind it so that the greater either immediately overshadows it or makes this star turn aside. The orbit occurs in either a brief or longer temporal interval according to the revolution's size, which bears a necessary correlation to the speed or slowness of each circuit.

I have remained silent regarding such matters in order to clearly explain the power of destiny, that is, whether we should understand God, who rules the entire universe by his strength in terms of fate or terms of this other power [i.e., the stars] which subject his authority to their dominion. If fate directs the universe, then no other higher principle exists. But if the stars' movement affirms that destiny governs them with coercion, it would be better to [**J.37**] attribute this power to the stars instead of an all-powerful force. In this instance, either the stars, the firmament's rotation, the movement within it, or the revolution within its axis are responsible. Should we concede that the stars do not move by themselves nor by a perpetual circular motion either with respect to each other or an external source but always retain their unchanging form, then fate does not exist. If the stars' revolution begets fate, they are mistakenly considered to govern other things or subject them to its rule; however, only movement can be held responsible.

The philosopher, however, disagrees with this and maintains that our position credits insubstantiality to fate. However, since created beings have an affinity that brings the universe

into harmony, and since everything forms one body where each member is in accord with the other, the more prominent element above arranges that which belongs to the earth. The latter inclines to the superior, and by necessity, they assume their respective motions, as it is said, through the power [J. 38] of each star. Every ingredient used to make a particular kind of medicine by carefully blending them yields a result other than their respective properties due to their equal importance prior to their combination. Similarly, our contemplation of the different properties belonging to the heavenly powers shows that they continuously affect lives [M. 153] in different ways due to their proximity or distance. As a result, persons who diligently ponder such matters can foresee the future with certainty. A skilled physician who dilutes either a hot or torpid medication with something salty or tart is able to predict its quality from the various properties of his mixture. For example, its result, how long its strength lasts, and whether it is harmful or beneficial. In like manner, a person who diligently applies himself to the stars above and considers each one knows their strength by how they are combined. Their influence is not identical with respect to a brief period of time; instead, their movement never remains the same with respect to other stars, and varying degrees of movement from these stars continuously affect their particular motion. In a short period of time [J.39], each star's property influences life by foretelling and influencing [the fate of] every person. Just as a seal impresses its form upon wax, so a person whose life is influenced by the stars' movement conforms to their properties and retains their influence right from the beginning. Having been sealed in such a manner, this influence expands to one's activities because the stars have determined his beginning and continue to motivate him.

When [the philosopher] asks me to continue my argument, I respond by saying that I was simply chattering away and have recounted that brief moment when, as you say, the stars held sway over us. They are the source of everything which influences us; if you maintain that this cause is inanimate and lacks free choice, its lifeless and unsubstantial nature cannot dominate animate beings, a fact revealed by its inability to motivate them. On the other hand, its every counsel, foresight, instruction, prudence, and virtuous deed resembles a tyrant or lifeless despot [J.40] without the power of choice, which is unstable, ephemeral, indivisible, and insubstantial. To what power do you attribute the preservation and order of creation? Cannot you see the absurdity of your position? If fate were a guiding principle, it would not follow but precede the order of creation. In this instance, fate exists before a person is born, although it plays no role in supporting such a birth. It is unclear here whether fate [or birth] comes first since both occur simultaneously. Before birth [M.156], a person naturally grows older and develops (for this is typical of movement), and a star moves and does not rest before we begin to breathe.

With regard to any event, we cannot judge which of the two comes first, the stars' motion or their influence upon human nature. If both share the same instant of time or if they coincide, how do they differ so that one is deemed more worthy than the other? If the stars were responsible for bringing man to birth, human nature would always be the same, and the process of human

generation would not occur within an interval of time. Furthermore, if these two births are so different, **[J.41]** human birth does not follow the stars' movement because the latter is always in motion while the former is not. However, no connection exists here because nature has determined it otherwise.

If you argue that time regulates man's destiny, consider its despotic, tyrannical nature, which is composed of day and night. As you maintain, both are divided into very small instances of time or twenty-four hours, and each hour is further divided into sixty minutes, with each minute composed of sixty seconds. More carefully observing such matters reveals that these units are broken down into even further minute divisions. I do not know what else we should call the multitude of these brief moments except gods, despots, or tyrants since they compose twenty-one myriads. If one hour contains such a multitude, one twenty-four-hour day yields countless individual fates. Since your reasoning affirms the immutability of each one, it follows that all are useful. Neither do you claim that they are ineffective; rather, their effectiveness lies in what they can achieve. Thus, all have equal **[J.42]** value. In as many divisions exist, each passing hour determines the birth of individual persons by necessity. If everyone had an identical fate, then each person would be a king, have a long life, power, happiness, and success, and be endowed with other blessings. Should anyone lack these attributes, he is judged as incomplete. Neither can you attribute the same power [of fate] to a great or humble person. For example, a person who lives to one hundred years of age in health and happiness is considered fortunate. He is surrounded by children, has a multitude of descendants in whom he delights, and enjoys sound health, prosperity, **[M.157]** honours, wealth, and anything else life can offer.

On the other hand, another person suffocates as soon as he is born. There are also numerous infants born out of wedlock to mistresses and adulterers determined to slay them. What is their fate, and why does it not provide for them? If you think that you have knowledge of fate's authority, it will appear the same in everyone; one person will not be strong, and another will not succeed unless he is in fate's grasp, which manifests itself through its effects. Life has no inequalities, but **[J.43]** promises happiness to everyone, whereas you claim that all persons are perpetually bound by fate.

If fate is supposed to govern everything, it permeates them thoroughly. However, persons vary enormously; they differ according to dignity, wealth, age, bodily composition, and anything else characterized as fortunate or miserable. Therefore, destiny is clearly not responsible for such inequality. But if we believe that fate engenders a long life, it brings an early death in the guise of infirmity. As a result, fate is responsible for afflicting one person with illness and for bestowing health upon another. Since the shortness of life is opposite to a lengthy one, fate must champion one or the other. Nobody can espouse both health and illness; rather, if destiny favours one, the other must also exist. Misery simply consists of the absence of happiness. Because many persons endure a miserable life, weakness appears greater than the power of fate. How can such

an all-powerful, unalterable force be impotent when its ineffective authority is supposed to dominate our lives? The afflictions endured by so many people clearly refute this position.

You say, however, that fate wills one thing for one person and something else for another; it thus determines the future for both lives. **[J.44]** In light of this, you suggest a difference with regard to choice. For example, consider two individuals with the same human nature. Neither has chosen good or evil, but one was born earlier; they are similar in nature, although one has preceded the other. Both lives are not identical; one is a prosperous, rich monarch cloaked in royal purple from birth, while the other is poor or enveloped by destitution. What wrong which inflicts such ignominy can we attribute to either an earlier or later birth determined not by fate but by nature? What defence **[M.160]** can you offer for fate? What role does justice, religion, or devotion play? Do you say that destiny is unconcerned with these, not to mention virtue and good deeds? If you disagree, the opposite is true because estrangement from the good clearly reveals an alliance with evil. Do you maintain that fate is neither responsible [for good or evil]?

You also say that fate is lifeless, lacks purpose, and cannot perceive good or evil since it is devoid of soul, choice and **[J.45]** substance. If you attest that fate's insubstantial nature both directs and prevails over created beings endowed with free choice, even though it lacks life, soul, the capacity for making choices, and virtue, is it not true that these also lack existence? How can you chatter on about the reality of destiny? Fate is lifeless, lacks form, and is not God. How can we perceive God when virtue and justice are absent? Since fate lacks these qualities, what is it? You claim that destiny is a continuous movement of time, whether it pertains to the movement of rivers, stars or men. Such brief segments of time do not refer to ships, travels by men, nor the stars' movement.

All types of movement have one measure of time, whether or not it is from one place to another. If fate does not cause temporal interruptions with regard to the flow of rivers, the motion of ships, or our wanderings, how can the stars' movement be responsible? How can you claim that observing the stars enables us to perceive the influence of fate upon an hour or **[J.46]** fraction of an hour? Why does not each person have his own particular omen? I will now restate my position. Some people firmly believe that fate causes good or evil. If stars set events in motion and bring men to birth, they are indeed responsible. However, it is clear that we cannot attribute birth to this source. The origin of a river's flow and human birth is not constant regarding the transient nature of time; instead, they are marked by intervals.

On the other hand, neither can an interval of time nor our senses know the origin of their fate, which the flow of time effects by the stars' continuous motion. What, then, is destiny? It is either a single general entity or many small segments of time that we **[M.161]** cannot comprehend. Do you claim that the stars move? We answer by mentioning a flowing river, which is always continuous in time, not outside it. However, we cannot ascertain the origin of the stars'

movement. What temporal origin do you offer on their behalf since they are eternal? Neither can we ascribe a reverse motion because water naturally [J.47] flows from a higher to a lower level. Although you concede that fate makes rivers flow, we do not acknowledge that fate is responsible for the stars' movement.

But you recognize the influence of [the constellations] Aries, Taurus, or the planets. If anyone happens to be born under their influence, whether under one star or with others clustered in a circle, their conjunction is supposed to affect a person's life at a particular time. How ridiculous! You say that Taurus is servile because it [a bull] is under the yoke and that Aries [a ram] represents profit gained from wool. If a person is either born or dies under one of these signs, fate naturally ascribes their properties to him. What should we make of this? Tell me, does a bull freely become docile or does a ram submit to shearing? Do the heavenly powers, heat from the planet Mars, or any other celestial body frustrate and paralyze a person either through his own consent or [J.48] against his will? If anyone who willingly does evil and inflicts injury admits to his behaviour, he is indeed miserable. Instead of choosing the good, he has opted for ignominy brought on by pleasure. If he commits these deeds not through choice but by necessity, then some other higher fate has determined the attributes and capacities proper to human nature. Thus, we must seek other more excellent stars with a distinctive movement connected with fate's obsessive character, such as a servile Taurus, a harmful Aries, a headless Crab [Cancer] or some other obscure influence. If these manifestations appear to us under the guise of destiny, we will concoct yet another source with a more compelling demand, and so on. As a result, we end up with countless fates, causes, and necessities.

I have been given a full report on these matters. Meanwhile, the philosopher whose bizarre position I am refuting interjects, "Why are you challenging the reality of fate? Why do you not imitate those who discern the truth through numbers and who accurately predict the hour of a person's birth [J.49], development, age, character, disposition, the dangers he experiences, marriage, children, reputation, or his lack of children, infirmities, disgrace, short life, and poverty? Since we can precisely foresee these events and testify to the fulfillment of truth, why do you not believe [M.164] in fate's necessity?" After inquiring about the cause of these predictions, I sought to know whether fate is irrational and accidental or has a purpose so that its consequences may be within the realm of probability. [My adversary] responds in the affirmative. Since the stars are responsible for our corporeal frame at birth, anyone who carefully observes the heavens knows in advance his constitution yet cannot discern his life span, let alone whether he will be healthy or ill. I tell my detractors that I am unaware of the fate that supposedly belongs to Galen, Hippocrates, or other similar persons. Without having recourse to the stars' movements, they can predict the future based on certain bodily qualities. Such individuals anticipate the advent of death when the eyes are sunken, the temples contract and the brow becomes shrivelled. Yet some persons claim that for many afflicted with ill health and those who are not yet expected [J.50] to pass away, medicine unravels the thread of fate. In the

same way, Plato recounts that Herodikos, the gymnastic teacher, could never recuperate his health through bodily exercise due to a mortal affliction. Instead, it delayed his death. Thus, [Herodikos] lived a long life by holding death at bay even though his training could not put it off. This example maintains that fate is permanent unless certain expertise can liberate us from necessity.

However, this argument does not confound the predictions made regarding fate because persons who accurately foretell heaven's movement by close observation retain an element of both certainty and doubt about death. I respond that an argument based upon necessity is indeed false; one outcome is possible while the other is not. Although these predictions are fascinating, they are certainly not based upon necessity.

I would like to know upon what foundation [the philosopher's] trust in fate rests. He says, "How often have you heard me now inquire about these matters? Each star has certain properties whose constant motion generates an infinite variety of attributes from their combinations. Therefore, fate determines **[J. 51]** a person's life at the hour of birth by the formation of stars, **[M. 165]** and this order remains constant throughout life." But what about wars, earthquakes, the destruction of cities, numerous shipwrecks with loss of both crew and cargo, floods, fires, earthquakes, and other forms of total destruction? With these in mind, how can anyone insist upon fate? Both our lives and those of our ancestors had abundant afflictions. For example, the flood in Noah's time, the holocaust of Sodom, the destruction of the Egyptian army in the Red Sea, the slaughter of alien tribes, the natural, innumerable deaths among the Israelites which occurred in a short period of time, the one-hundred and eighty-five thousand Assyrians who suddenly perished, the many calamities of the Medes and Greeks suffered in wars at sea and on land, and other misfortunes recounted by history. Let us now continue because our own age has **[J. 52]** enough disasters. Who is unfamiliar with the great metropolis of Bithynia, distinguished among cities, which was ignorant of broad, spacious Thrace? War, earthquakes, and fire suddenly destroyed it. Many perished in a single instant: children, infants, those in middle and old age, the free and slaves, victors and vanquished, wealthy and poor, the strong and weak. All their homes have become tombs. Where are those combinations of stars which determine the lives of different individuals? Were all these persons born under the same conjunction, and did [the sign of] Cancer determine the same fate for everyone? The infinite diversity of life spans and classes of people attest that they were not all born at the same time. Both the time of each person's birth and death are different, a fact which reveals the absurdity and inconsistency of fate.

"But," says [the philosopher], "fate plays an important role in the launching of ships, the origin of cities and peoples since it directs the consequence of these endeavours." Therefore, who gives birth [lit., Ilithyia, the goddess of childbirth] to shipping? Who **[J. 53]** begets cities? How did various races originate? Woodcutters hew timber; the merchant sells it, the sailor obtains

revenue from the sale and the profit is divided from all this labour. One person cuts the wood into planks while another makes a ship's keel. Yet another person prepares the hull, and someone else fashions its prow. Wood is also used for the mast and the yard-arm. Some craftsmen weave rope from thread, while others construct the ship's rudder. Workers also labour on the deck and sails, adorn the ship with paintings, apply pitch to its frame, and form the hold. Each workman does not toil simultaneously; rather, one does his work now while another does it later. In this way, the finished product is brought **[M. 168]** to completion. How, then, does fate guide these craftsmen in their occupation? What directs the sale, cutting and handling of wood, the use of iron, or fastening of bolts? Once this construction, which progresses at different intervals, is completed, how can you determine the time when fate brings death to the sailors? What do you say about fate, which is supposed to control cities? How does it **[J. 54]** guide colonization, the choice of location, the shape of towns, or whether to construct its buildings with iron, stone, or wood? What is the origin of this city's foundation? What do you say about the people who have become exhausted by war? What fate dooms their beginning or reduces them to an ignominious servitude? How did Hannibal, Caesar or Alexander of Macedonia mete out the same fate to their adversaries when they inflicted everyone by their evil deeds? The argument which rests upon the coincidence of fate with a star as responsible for a city's destruction by earthquakes is not convincing. Who does not know that such movements within the earth occur in both inhabited and uninhabited places? If anyone either sees the mountain of the Sagaris located in the territory of Bithynia or hears about it from others, he will discover the truth about its height, which looms over those passing under it. The same holds true for the unstable region of the Paphlagonians **[J. 55]**, which must often be abandoned because earthquakes sunder these inhabited places. Must we mention Cyprus, Pisidas, and Achivos, let alone many other locations? However, we take note of them because they all suffer from earthquakes. Should anyone be in these areas, he would suffer the consequences, but if not, he would escape calamity. What is the compulsion of destiny which brings misfortune to both inhabited and uninhabited areas?

If we could demonstrate that part of the earth, not all of it, is subject to calamities, idle talk would attribute that it is subject to a certain conjunction of the stars or the compulsion of fate. Each part of creation is interconnected: heaven, earth and the sea. Moses said that **[Gn 1.9 & 14]** the earth was made before the rotating stars. How, then, **[M. 169]** can their movement influence certain parts of it? But if the earth and stars were created simultaneously, they would have no compatibility, which would cause disturbances [of the earth] in certain places. Fate is not responsible; other **[J. 56]** reasons exist for these disasters. When the earth rumbles and causes calamities, ruin comes to populated areas. What do persons say who revere fate and claim that the stars' movement causes tragedy? What is responsible for the death of an infant, child, adolescent, grown man, father, elder, well-born person, aristocrat, hireling, or captive? All do not differ with respect to their time of birth, nor do the evils they endure make any distinction. Who does not know that incest with one's daughter, marriage to one's sister, or violation of one's mother are examples of outrageous behaviour? If fate triggers such acts, our actions manifest

them. Since the Persians alone are guilty of such outrageous behaviour, it clearly follows that destiny and fate seem determined by each person's free will.

It cannot be said that the stars' movement exerts an influence in such examples as **[J. 57]** marrying one's own mother, the murder of guests, or cannibalism. If this opinion of untrained persons who fail to observe nature because certain parts of the earth are supposed to be under the stars' control (if terrestrial elements are older than the heavens, the situation should be the other way around), we add the following argument to their erroneous opinion: the Jewish people spread out over every part of the earth and mingled with its inhabitants to the east, south, north, and around the Mediterranean. How did the Jews suffer no harm from these people since they were uninfluenced by the stars, whose infinite connections supposedly control our birth and afflict the rest of our lives with disgrace?

He [the philosopher] responds by saying that we cannot understand the stars' grip upon many nations as ordained by laws. It is difficult to show that the prediction of the future remains unchanged as pertaining to each person's destiny. How can anyone truly reveal the number of years meted out to a person and predict the outcome of his life? This is only possible if he believes in an **[J. 58]** eternal force and claims to have clear knowledge about the future through observing a certain number of signs.

It is better for me to either remain silent or to furnish an occasion of ridicule for those untrained in our beliefs. But other persons **[M. 172]** of shallow understanding mock us, and I wish that I could briefly reveal their position. Countless examples show that human nature has certain aggressive qualities that are opposed to what is good. However, it is unnecessary at present to enumerate them all. We may perceive the divine nature in every good thought and name manifested in our lives, such as light, truth, righteousness, wisdom, incorruptibility, and any other good we can comprehend. We can recognize the divine nature and its attributes by all those things that are opposite to it, for example, death instead of life, deceit instead of truth, and every type of evil inimical **[J. 59]** to man. Anyone who embraces these becomes an abomination. Persons who often commit evil deeds offer a deadly cure since its taste is disguised with honey. Similarly, that corruptible nature within the soul seduces a person by assuming a good form and veils deception under the guise of a cure. People rush after this deadly poison, thinking it to be good while it contains nothing beneficial. Thus, whenever we encounter anyone with the pretense of knowing the future through deception which is controlled by demons, for example, through divinization, augury, omens, oracles about the dead, and genealogies, each one is different and predicts the future in dissimilar ways. Therefore inspecting a liver or observing birds in flight to foresee the future does not promise their outcome by fate's compulsion. We claim that all these examples have one cause and assume one form (I mean demonic deception) since a prediction does not come true at **[J. 60]** a given time if indeed it does occur. Thus, the power of fate is demonstrated since every divinization is usually substantiated through some sort

of prediction. Dreams form one kind of fate while another comes from bodily palpitations; yet another arises from augury, omens, or symbols. If none thwarts prophecy and is not fate, then any number of genealogies cannot make a prediction. This gives us sufficient reason to believe that fate does not apply to such divinizations. There is nothing accurate and certain about their predictions. But should [M. 173] they fail; persons who perform them offer excuses and invent reasons; for example, a sign did not happen to be appropriate at the time. Generally [J. 61] their predictions are ambiguous, and they vacillate between them. In this way, any event turns into a prophecy. Often, whatever is extraordinary and unusual is understood as foretelling the hour of one's birth. A person who makes these predictions refuses to be disappointed by unusual events because they are tainted by evil. Our memory of history testifies to this. Valens was a Roman emperor and imposter who moved to rebel against its authority. He hastened to gain legitimacy for his reckless act through genealogies, but his venture ended when the chief magistrates became aware of it through the magnitude of this calamity. Valens' support from genealogies became known to many people when they realized the extent of this misfortune, not its advantage.

I decline to say that these fraudulent predictions are related to fate; rather, they and many similar notions are the invention of demons. For the gulping of water, [J. 62] tasting certain foods and breathing through the mouth to obtain a prediction can induce mental derangement. If a woman engages in such practices, her stomach swells, and her mental turmoil is soothed. All divinizations are deceptive: a forecast of the future from a liver, fire, and the flight of birds cannot make predictions by fate. Instead, all are forms of demonic possession.

In conclusion, I think that the examples above are not true divinations because numerous contradictions refute them. If anyone shows that fate prefigures a future event, each one strikes us as being some form of prediction. Every case is erroneous because their fulfillment appears true, yet it is the result of demonic deception that stamps them. The influence of fate turns man from God, the source of every good [J. 63], and makes them hasten after demons. Therefore, people are easily persuaded not to direct their lives according to God's counsel but by the combination of stars. This depravity makes them hasten after that deception so typical of demons. If the demons rejoice at a person who rejects God, their duplicity makes them revolt. Clearly, their influence causes error, for it is thought to lie in such deceitful methods which avert us from the authority of God, who is all-powerful.

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